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1

...

2

i'm toadpaw.

3

nobody likes me, but i don't care.

4

it is sunhigh right now.

5

all the cats are chattering away.

6

hawthornpaw walks up to me, but she obviously thought i was my brother.

7

oh yeah, i have an identical brother named bluebellpaw.

8

"hey there," she meows, brushing her tail along my face.

9

i blink. "this is toadpaw, not bluebellpaw."

10

"oh..." she says.

11

i've never seen a cat turn away so quickly.

12

that was okay, it didn't hurt me.

13

i glance over my shoulder to see bluebellpaw and hawthornpaw.

14

i quickly look away.

15

starlingbriar notices me sitting alone.

16

i watch the plump queen as she plops down next to me.

17

"how's life, toadpaw?"

18

"meh," i said.

19

"erm... okay, then," starlingbriar mewed.

20

i watch bluebellpaw, and how he acts around hawthornpaw.

21

i discover a new emotion: annoyance

22

i walk up to bluebellpaw, unsure of what i say.

23

"you - you make me mad sometimes, you old rat!" i meow.

24

bluebellpaw looks at me a moment before laughing at me.

25

i sit there, blankly.

26

usually, my brother would talk with me like i was the same.

27

...

28

but not around hawthornpaw...

29

still, the days went by.

30

hawthornpaw and bluebellpaw avoided me and called me things like 'toad-face' behind my back, as usual.

31

one day, hawthornpaw's sister stood up for me.

32

why did she do it? i wonder.

33

i noticed she was acting weird around me.

34

"weaselpaw, why'd you stand up for me?" i said.

35

then she got in my face.

36

"because i... *like* you," she mewed.

37

i blinked.

38

"i like you, too?" i said, confused.

39

didn't everyone in a clan like each other?

40

one day, i actually went on a patrol.

41

we ran into a cat slightly older than me.

42

"what's your name?" i whispered.

43

he tilted his head to the side.

44

"i'm sandy... sandypaw!"

45

this sandypaw was different, too.

46

weaselpaw was close beside me.

47

she licked my ear.

48

i shifted closer to sandypaw.

49

jackalstep and kiwitoe ask sandypaw a lot of questions.

50

i returned to camp.

51

sandypaw came to live with us, too.

52

ever since, i'd felt a little better.

53

sandypaw and i did everything together.

54

we even experienced new emotions together!

55

i've learned things like joy and pride...

56

and love.

57

soon, the day for us to become a warrior arrives.

58

bluebellpaw is named bluebellheart.

59

hawthornpaw becomes hawthornfire.

60

weaselpaw becomes weaselwhisker.

61

sandypaw becomes sandybrook.

62

then, the leader calls my name.

63

"you will be toadmask!"

64

toadmask. sandybrook.

65

i can't stop saying our new names!

66

the next morning, all of us are so tired.

67

when we walk back into camp, i lean my head on sandybrook's flank.

68

he whispers something to me.

69

"love, it's only a short walk."

70

i am so very tired, but i curl up in the warrior's den with sandybrook, my mate.

71

sandybrook. toadmask. mates.

72

weaselwhisker seems mad at us.

73

she looks at me strangely all the time now.

74

one morning, i wake up without my beloved sandybrook!

weaselwhisker was not there, either.

76

i learn another emotion: fear.

77

i hear voices from the moor, so I head closer.

78

"stop being mates with him, or else," a molly said.

79

"no - i love toadmask!"

80

sandybrook?

81

i can see them now.

82

weaselwhisker - that rat-face - is hurting *my* mate!

83

i rush to save him, but weaselwhisker was prepared.

84

she tears into his soft throat.

85

"no!"

86

weaselwhisker just leaves him there to die.

87

i lick the blood gushing out of my beloved's wound.

88

"i love you," he sputters and closes his eyes.

89

i start sobbing into his matted pelt.

90

his heart is stopping, and with each slow breath, i feel the walls closing in on me.

91

i think of those times we played together... with no emotion.

92

i have forgotten how to feel again.

93

well, what was the point?

94

i can't feel anything for sandybrook, so why feel at all? i think.

95

i hear a cat trying to talk to me, and i can hear their voice quivering.

96

bluebellheart.

97

"please, toadmask! nobody's sure who you are anymore!" he says

98

i think his words through carefully.

99

"okay," i said.

100

"because neither am i."

trivia

➳ toadmask was gay and bluebellheart was bisexual

➳ sandybrook was actually named whiskey when he was first introduced, but decided to and fit in, thus the name sandypaw

➳ hawthornfire was homophobic, and she forced weaselwhisker into hating lgbt+ cats

➳ in the original draft, toadmask was going to be a sociopath, and he was a medicine cat

➳ this takes place in windclan

➳ toadmask is a black and white tomcat with a brown tail and amber eyes

➳ weaselwhisker is still alive, and if she finds toadmask in the future, will still press him to be her mate